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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#) [MK](#)  
SUBJECT: GREECE/MACEDONIA: MFA FINDS NIMETZ PROPOSAL  
UNACCEPTABLE (BUT ISN'T SAYING SO NOW)

Classified By: CHARGE TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a November 9 meeting with MFA Secretary General Agathocles, Charge summarized Ambassador Nuland's message to the GOM: time was short if it planned to meet NATO standards. Nuland had also urged the GOM to participate fully in the Nimetz negotiations (and stop negotiating via public statements). Charge emphasized the importance, as the Nimetz process moved forward, of restraint by both sides, recommitment to the Interim Agreement, and direct bilateral dialogue on issues affecting the two countries. He also noted that, should either side walk away from the Interim Agreement, the basis of U.S. policy since 1995, we would need to consider how to adjust our policy. Agathocles resented the "threat," and argued that any bilateral dialogue with the GOM would have to wait until after the name issue was resolved. The name was the "spearhead" of Macedonia's policy; once that was neutralized, the two countries could move to CBMs. Agathocles, normally low-key, firmly rejected any suggestion for bilateral discussions other than the Nimetz negotiation. Speaking "personally" however, he termed Nimetz's opening paper unacceptable; Greece saw it as an opening gambit and had not rejected it at this stage. END SUMMARY.

NOT REJECTING NIMETZ PAPER -- BUT NOT ACCEPTING IT EITHER

¶2. (C) Agathocles noted FM Bakoyiannis's visit to London this week, terming her consultations on the Macedonia name issue "positive" while admitting that he did not have a precise readout of the discussion. Reacting to the Nimetz proposal of November 1, Agathocles said that the GOG could not accept it -- but realized that Nimetz was using it to start discuss( it was important that me that would be used ons and multilateral fr; it now accepted that could be used in that na@ject the Nimetz paper, ascuttle the discussions had resisted any public statements. Agathocles appreciated Ambassador Nuland's visit to Skopje on November 8, and her influence on PM Gruevski's statements. The GOM needed to realize that the GOG meant business.

¶3. (C) Agathocles suggested that the GOM was actually going against the wishes of much of its public. Perhaps a slight majority agreed with Gruevski that the name issue was of key importance. The rest were more concerned with NATO entry and economic development. Governments needed to lead; the GOG had taken a constructive position despite the fact that 81% of its public opposed a name that included the word Macedonia.

¶4. (C) Speaking personally, Agathocles stressed that any proposed name must be used both in bilateral relations with all countries as well as in multilateral fora. There would need to be practical measures to guarantee this. Any attempt by the GOM to reverse the agreement should carry consequences in the EU and NATO. Charge pressed: did Agathocles mean to

say that, for the issue to be resolved satisfactorily, the GOM would have to change its constitution? Yes, Agathocles responded -- just to "add some words."

#### KEEPING PUBLIC STATEMENTS NEUTRAL

15. (C) Charge noted that Ambassador Nuland had focused on NATO standards: the GOM was not making the progress needed and time was short. Internal reform and ethnic reconciliation were critical. On the name issue, she told FM Gruevski firmly that his public statements were unhelpful and worked against resolution of the issue. She pressed the GOM to make clear it would continue negotiations through the Nimetz process. Negotiating in public was counter-productive.

16. (C) In our view, Charge said, both governments needed to avoid public statements (we were pleased the GOG had avoided press comments on the Nimetz paper). It was also our expectation -- as it had been for 12 years -- that both sides would recommit themselves to their obligations under the Interim Agreement. Both sides needed to understand that U.S. policy was based on the principle that the provisional name "FYROM" would be used in international organizations until such time as a solution to the name issue was agreed by both parties. Agathocles countered that the GOG was not prepared to let Macedonia enter NATO as FYROM ("that's out completely.")

#### WHILE ENHANCING BILATERAL DIALOGUE

17. (C) Charge added that we also encouraged both sides to establish direct bilateral channels to discuss all issues of mutual concern. There was no substitute for direct dialogue.

It would be helpful if the GOG would formulate, in a concise way, the specific examples of Macedonian irredentism or misuse of Greek cultural heritage. That would make it possible for specific issues to be addressed and resolved. Agathocles noted that any list would also need to include efforts -- government or otherwise -- to exploit the issue of individuals claiming "Macedonian" origin in Greece. Such efforts were orchestrated, though it was tough to prove GOM complicity.

18. (C) When it came to direct dialogue, however, Agathocles argued that all bilateral issues could be discussed -- once the name issue was resolved. At that time the GOG was prepared to offer the GOM a "substantial" package. Charge disagreed; dialogue was essential to confidence building on both sides. Agathocles stuck to his guns, however, arguing that the name issue was the "spearhead" for policy. The GOM's policy was a change of borders, and that must be removed. Later, bilateral commissions could work on CBMs.

#### IF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT FAILS, WHAT NEXT?

19. (C) Finally, Charge noted that it was unclear to us what steps would need to be taken should one party or the other withdraw from the Interim Agreement. The U.S. had helped to broker the Agreement, and it was the basis of our policy. We would need to think about what action to take in the UNSC or UNGA, in order to handle contingencies in its absence. Agathocles immediately termed this "a threat," adding that it would simply encourage Skopje not to negotiate. Charge rejoined that it was not a threat, but a fact: the collapse of the Interim Agreement would require not only Athens and Skopje, but also Washington and Brussels, to re-think long-standing policy. Agathocles argued that the Interim Agreement was negotiated in order to prompt a resolution of the name issue. For 12 years, no progress had been made -- and Greece had turned a blind eye. It was the GOM that had avoided finding a solution, seeking to impose its preferred solution via bilateral recognition.

#### COMMENT

110. (C) The most positive thing about the Greek position as

we heard it today is that it's not their final, official position. The second most positive thing is that they are serious enough about the Nimetz process to have avoided discussing its details publicly. Nothing else about this conversation was positive. Agathocles is one of the more mild-mannered Greek diplomats, but we could see his blood pressure go up as we urged him to make a good, concise argument regarding specific GOM actions they find objectionable. Perhaps most disappointing is that he showed no appreciation for the potential value of bilateral contacts in any format other than the Nimetz negotiations.

COUNTRYMAN